

# At least £1 million needed to save replica of ancient Roman mosaic for

Pictures: Not for resale



# Pave the way for Orpheus in city!

23.8.01

**T**OWARDS the end of the Roman occupation of Britain a villa was built at a settlement we now call Woodchester, near Stroud. The sumptuous residence no doubt played host to men and women of noble standing – tribunes, senators, centurions, legionaries, musicians, poets, philosophers.

Countless sandalled feet would have criss-crossed the fourth Century villa's marble floors and mosaic pavements.

The glory days of Rome are long gone, the empire's 500-year hold on England long since relinquished. Gone too that Roman Villa at Woodchester.

But one fine day in 1793, a distinguished Gloucestershire archaeologist by the name of Samuel Lysons made one of the greatest finds of Roman Britain.

Deep beneath Woodchester churchyard, he

**WOODCHESTER'S famous Orpheus Pavement replica could be leaving Gloucestershire – unless we take action now. Dennis Apperly reports**

unearthed a 50 sq ft mosaic floor, the largest mosaic in Northern Europe.

Made from some 1.6 million pieces, the splendid mosaic known as the Orpheus Pavement was later uncovered and went on show in 1951, 1963 and 1973, reburied after each showing to ensure its preservation.

Determined that preservation should not result in denying people the opportunity of savouring this colourful work of art, Wotton-under-Edge brothers Bob and John Woodward made an exact replica of the

1700-year-old mosaic. The brothers sold the replica to Stroud entrepreneur Alec Lawless, who has since moved to Bristol. The replica soon became internationally-known and valued as a work of art in its own right.

Mr Lawless, who is away on holiday, was not available to say how much the replica would be worth. But a valuation by the British Museum in 1988 put the price at £1 million.

The British Museum described it as "being of national importance" and having "considerable intrinsic value as an object of art". It was classed as a "major document of academic research".

The replica, which is currently kept in store in Stroud, has been periodically on display at county venues including the former Greenaways Mill at Ebley, Stroud.

But now the future of the replica Orpheus Pavement is uncertain.

Gloucester City council has revealed the worrying news that it is being made available for

■ **GLORY THAT WAS ROME:** The replica of the Orpheus Pavement, above, and a detail showing the mythological character of Orpheus with his lyre, below.



sale. And there are even dark rumours that the unique reconstruction might be taken out of the country altogether. Eager to keep the replica in Gloucestershire – the county of its

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